

## IS WAR ETERNAL?<sup>1</sup>

*Gentlemen of the Rice Institute, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

**I**T is to me a very great pleasure and a very real pleasure to be with you to-day.

It is only a little while ago that a young man, who had been appointed president of an institution that did not then exist, came to me to talk over the situation. He had ideals, —ideals that could be worked into action, ideals of genuine realities in education, the ideal that quality was a more important thing than numbers, and the ideal that friendliness was a component quality of good teaching. I was very much interested in what he was doing.

There is a fine spirit growing up in all our universities. We are all glad to see the work done as it ought to be. I can remember when I was in Cornell as a pioneer freshman in 1868, when James Russell Lowell and Professor Agassiz came over from Harvard and a member of the Harvard Board of Overseers told those distinguished men that they were traitors to Harvard because they went out to lecture in a rival institution. Those trustees are all dead, and all their kind are exterminated from the face of the earth. We all realize that everything that goes to make the business of education respectable is something we can encourage under all circumstances.

Now, this institution has many of the same ideals that Stanford had: the ideal of being good-looking to the eye,—

<sup>1</sup> Address delivered by David Starr Jordan, Chancellor of Stanford University, at the first commencement convocation of the Rice Institute, held Monday morning, June 12, 1916, at 9 o'clock.

there are here a great many beautiful buildings,—and the ideal as to the kind of faculty it should have is shown by simply taking from Stanford one of the best of its men to become a professor of the faculty here. That is what we call a practical compliment and appreciation; and if we ever get rich enough at Stanford we may return the compliment in a practical way. But I have nothing to do with it any more. I am simply the wandering, talking man, Chancellor Emeritus, one who started in twenty-five years ago and got through alive, which is a great thing for a university president. To do this requires many of the qualities the president of the Rice Institute has.

Now comes my talk, and what I want to say is summed up in these words:

Every great evil dies in the moment of its highest triumph. When a great evil is triumphant, then it is bound to die, because men see it nakedly for what it is; and when an evil gets itself big enough for men to see it nakedly, then it is doomed. The greatest evil in the world is that of International War. We got rid of two of the worst of crimes some three hundred years ago. One of these was the baronial war, when every duke and lord and nobleman had his own private army, his private dungeon, and his private graveyard. This was in the days of chivalry. If you want to know the real truth about chivalry, don't go to a moving picture show, don't go to the romantic novels. Go to the criminal records of the day when criminals ruled the world. History is largely the record of a slow upward movement, the rise of the common man and the progress of democracy.

The prophets of the world are not the foretellers of coming events, but of coming inspirations. They can see to-day what all men must see to-morrow—the cheapness of glory, the crime of injustice. In advance of their time they feel the

reaction inherent in human nature when men come to understand.

There are two current arguments used to uphold the war system. The first of these is that war is the source of national virility, of national power. The other is that war is eternal.

The idea that war makes for individual virility confuses bluster with power. In all times war-making has assumed the name of patriotism. Its reckless overriding of common welfare has been called strength, while the concentration of all effort on victory tends to confuse all moral values. Victory at any price is one of the chief obstacles in the path of human freedom.

Whatever the primal nature of war, its every act is murder or robbery. Its temporary effect is moral degradation and the lowering of national aims. Its permanent effect is the lowering of manhood, the extirpation of the high-spirited, the brave, and the strong, the very elements of the nation which bring success in war or in peace. It is a law of biology that like produces like among men as among animals. "Like the seed is the harvest." Each generation is the reproduction of those who were its actual parents. In the business of gathering armies, those young men who are hardy, strong, and hearty, without blemish so far as may be, are sent to the front. On the field of slaughter these are taken first. Lord Kitchener once said that in any war the first two hundred killed on either side are the best. "Send forth the best ye breed," has been the immemorial call of war. The nations which respond breed from the second best. It is a Spanish proverb: "Lions breed lions; a brave man has brave sons."

I was in London when the war began. I saw the men from Oxford and Cambridge, fine upstanding fellows, every

athlete included, and men of wisdom and power, men like Ronald Poulton and Rupert Brooke, who fell before the slaughter was half begun. I saw the men from the other universities, the "picked half-million," as my friend Stead used to call them; "those who command while the world must obey." I saw the university men of Scotland, still more vigorous, on the whole, coming down to be trained at Aldershot; "the unreturning brave of the Aisne and the Yser." Around these as they marched in the London parks, lying on the grass and smoking cigarettes, lay the young men of London whom the war could not use. There may have been a hundred thousand of them—undersized for the most part, but that is nothing. A little man is just as good as a big one if he is as well put together. He may be a better soldier: he is not hit so often. But these men of the discard were badly put together; loose-jointed, knock-kneed, suffering from adenoids and pyorrhœa, saturated with gin and shot through with vice, the army had no use for them. "You cannot go to France or Flanders," said Lloyd George. "You are useless to your country under a strain. You stay here in London and become the fathers of the next generation, even as your fathers and grandfathers, who, kept out of the wars in India, in Burma and South Africa, stayed here and built up the London slums." The slums of the great cities of Europe are built up by those war could not use. They slide down the lines of least resistance into the great hopper they have themselves built, and at last there remains a slum population of men who could not earn their living in any part of the world. The best are lost in war, and the sons of the feeble-minded weakly take their place. This is a Moorish proverb: "Father a weed, mother a weed, do you expect the daughter to be a saffron-root?" Father of the slums, mother of the slums, do you expect the son to be a British yeoman? This

is the long cost of war—the last cost, the sacrifice in greater or less degree of those whose life creates the nation, and the loss of the long widening wedge of those who should have been their descendants. The destruction of the strong is the primal function of war, and in the long run only those nations survive which have had least of it. The downfall of empire through the ages means the progressive destruction of those whose energy made empire possible. The present war must show its effects for a century, in the physical decline, and more or less in the mental and moral decline, of the great nations of Europe. The idea that any permanent physical, moral or spiritual values are inherent in war is one of the exploded notions of a world's childhood. The imperative word of science is: "Like the seed is the harvest."

The other argument for war reads like this: "There has always been war; human nature demands it; human nature does not change; war, then, will always be."

It is not true that human nature does not change. It changes very slowly, for better or for worse. Vice and idleness destroy the least efficient; war and industrial negligence tend to destroy the best; and like the seed is the harvest.

But the angle at which human nature looks in human institutions may change, and change very suddenly. Nations may undergo a process of conversion to good or to evil, even as an individual. A great wrong dies in the moment of its highest triumph. When men come to see it nakedly, even as the prophets have seen it, that wrong must pass away. And the greatest of all wrongs is that embodied in collective murder, the idea that crime becomes a virtue if compassed on a large scale with the sanction of the state and the blessing of the state church.

Just for a moment we may glance into history, touching a few points here and there. Let us go back first to the begin-

nings of Europe, when our race ran wild in the forests of Germany. But that is not far back. We are very near the beginning now. In history's long perspective, these days of Napoleon and Kitchener, of Bismarck and Beaconsfield, will take their place alongside those of Cæsar and Moses and Homer, of Trismegistus and Ozymandias, the dark ages of war. What better evidence do we need than that found in the common suicide which civilized Europe has inflicted on itself? We are still in the dark ages, when neither science nor religion can hold its own against war.

Human nature changes very slowly, and only backward or forward by the process of selection, the killing of the best or the worst. Any education enables the better ones to outlive the others and to increase in numbers; even though their number of children be smaller, their number of children that live and amount to something is much greater. The manifestations of human nature change rapidly through education. The angle of vision changes very quickly. The angle at which we look at a great crime may change with a sudden flash.

We are going to see the phenomena of nationalism very differently in a short time. We shall be ashamed of that fever of so-called patriotism, that excited stimulation which forces a man blindly to hate another nation and to brand its citizens as inferior and wicked. Europe has been perverted by this patriotism of lies. To escape from it demands no change in human nature. It is a matter of education. Perverted education causes perverted nationalism, which shows itself in a perverted patriotism. This has made it possible for a very few men to drag Europe into a war that is, in a way, wrecking the whole civilization of Europe.

Long ago, after a great battle in which our ancestors, the In-Group, were victorious over some forgotten Out-Group,

the feast of rejoicing took place. The wise men of the In-Group ate the brains of the Out-Group sages to acquire their wisdom. The young men of the In-Group ate the hearts of the Out-Group heroes, that their courage might pass over to them. And the half-starved common folk, our ancestors,—yours and mine,—ate their fill from the accumulated mass of human bodies.

But some one rose and said: "All this is wrong. It is a degradation of the efforts of the gods, whose noblest work is man. How do you know that eating brains gives wisdom or eating hearts gives courage? That is tradition, to be sure; men have always believed it, as they have believed many other things. But that does not make it true. And even if it be true, that is not the right way to gain wisdom or courage. It is all wrong, and it will bring its punishment."

There they took up the old argument. There had always been battle feasts. It is a demand of human nature, and human nature never changes. There would be no reason for war if the feasts were given up. And in peace men would grow soft and gentle, wisdom and courage would decay. You cannot fight unless you mean to kill.

So they disposed of him very readily. He was only one man. Prophets are the softest things possible when you go at them with rack and sword. But his words sank deep, and if we can believe the flimsiest of traditions, the greatest of cannibal feasts was the last. This we know, that the feast had passed away before our ancestors were able to make any history.

Running through history, touching it at the highest places for the moment, human sacrifices to one or more gods were current among the civilized world. They were practised among men as wise and experienced as you or I. Prophets

spoke against them, but some prophets recognized them as infallible, that the only way to propitiate gods is to give up what we have to them. So kings gave up their eldest sons, their sweethearts, and their eldest daughters. They were offered as burnt-offerings. They saw it nakedly for what it was, that if the gods were good they would be propitiated in that way. Then they put in kids and lambs and cows for the same purpose. Then some spoke up against that, saying that the god of the spring loves the "grass-green meadows, the grazing kine's sweet breath," and not these bloody sacrifices and these gifts that smell of death. And so in one nation after the other that sort of thing was put away.

Human nature does not change, but the angle at which men see things changes, and changes very rapidly. It is possible for the civilized world to undergo something like what is called conversion and sudden change of outlook upon life. Physiologists tell us, some psychologists tell us, some such change comes at the age of thirteen to fifteen years, a time when the world looks suddenly different to the young man or the young woman, when they begin to see things in broad outline in a large way; and some such conversion comes when a young man goes to college, or the young woman; or when they go out of college, and all along as they receive additional intellectual or spiritual impulses. The world looks different to them. They see things at a different angle from what they saw them before.

Almost two thousand years ago, among the dry hills of Syria, there arose a young Man who spake as never man spake, of human freedom, and divine love, and of brotherhood among men. The record of His words is far from complete. Those who had never heard Him recorded His sayings in a tongue not His own. But there was something in His words which compelled the attention of the world.



God is the Father of all men, and all men are brothers. Each has the right and the duty to make the most of himself. Each has the right to speak in prayer to his Father, and this he can do in his own closet or on his own mountain, or wherever it may be, with no intervention of a holy priest or a holy city. There were many other things which He said, but it was all permeated with the idea of the holy freedom of the human soul, and the feeling of brotherly love and the coöperation of the kindly-affectioned.

But the conception of the day of democracy and peace His words foreshadowed dazed the time-servers of his day. It is recorded that

“Those whom the Light did blind rose angrily,  
And nailed His body to the cruel tree;  
But He resented not, nor bid them nay,  
Because that He had seen God face to face.”

He was but one Man among thousands, and they disposed of Him very easily. But some part of His words has fallen into the heart of every one of us. We see the affairs of life at a different angle. And this is true in some degree of every man and woman who lives on earth to-day.

But the selfishness of men obscured even His teachings. The priest was still at outs with the prophets, and the right of private interpretation was dangerous to the institutions men had built up in His name. So it became necessary for the sake of the church to extirpate the heresies which had sprung up around it. On the green in front of one of the colleges at Oxford they built two great pyres of pine-wood around the bodies of Latimer and Ridley, two British scholars who had put their own meaning into the Master's words.

Then Latimer said to Ridley: “Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, for we shall kindle a torch which shall be seen of all

England." And the flame was lighted, and all England saw nakedly what religious persecution meant. And the actual flames of intolerance were never kindled again. These prophets were disposed of very easily, but their death caused men to see the wickedness of their undoing.

Some three hundred years ago, and more, Central Europe was in the direst possible confusion. While the feudal system was in vogue every prince, every lord, every free city had its own army. Every baron had his own dungeon tower, his own graveyard, his own system of seizing his rivals and holding them for ransom. The common people were not citizens, but chattels, owned body and soul by the feudal lords and spiritual masters. Everywhere Catholic was armed against Protestant, and Protestant against Catholic; while wandering bandits, who knew neither religion nor nationality, were to be hired for murder and rapine of every degree. To have any respect for the spirit of the days of chivalry one must seek it in romance, never in historical fact.

In these days, when the civilization of Europe was at its lowest ebb, in a land in which every man, woman, and child was under sentence of death from the King of Spain, arose Hugo Grotius, one of the noblest of the long line of prophets, a link in the long chain that shall never come to its end. Much of the life of Grotius was spent in prison, and he never knew a year of even approximate peace. But no work of any man has come in modern times nearer to that of the Founder of our religion than that of Hugo Grotius.

The Thirty Years' War of religion in Germany reduced the population of that region from about twenty millions to six millions. And at last, when the delegates came together at Münster for the Treaty of Westphalia, sick and tired of war, they resolved that religious wars, baronial wars, and all that type of murderous discord should never again be

revived; and it never has appeared since that time. Human nature has not changed. It retains its weakness, its intolerance, its obedience to the swashbuckler, its sham patriotism based on hate; but warfare in the name of religion has passed away. Men see it at a different angle, because they see it nakedly. Nations have been built up through the disarming of their feudal units. And just as surely as feudalism has melted into nationalism or partial federation, just so surely must nationalism give way to federation, complete enough to leave no place for war.

I might go on in history touching high places. We have come to see the institution of slavery from a different angle from what we used to see it. There was a time, something over fifty years ago, when human slavery reached its climax in the esteem of the world. There came a tall, gaunt, shaggy-haired, bloody-handed man out from the West and placed himself squarely in the road, saying either slavery or he must perish. We cannot say that John Brown's record on the red fields of Kansas had been wholly a noble one. It is plain enough that he violated the law and forfeited his life; but the fact remains, he stood squarely in front of a slave-chasing nation and demanded reconsideration of our attitude. Even in the North in those days there were religious leaders who maintained that the negro was an inferior type of man; that, being so, he should take a lower place; he should do our work for us and be thankful for the chance.

You will remember that in the little town of Harper's Ferry, where the Shenandoah runs into the Potomac, to John Brown, who was shot and lay wounded in an old engine-house, men came up and said, "Who sent you here?" From that moment John Brown became a prophet. His noblest side came to the surface. "Nobody sent me here; I obey only my own promptings and those of my Master; I acknowledge no

master in any human form; I am come to try to save those whom you wickedly and wantonly hold in bondage, men and women that are just as good as you are, and just as precious in the sight of the Lord. I have never heard that God is a respecter of persons. You may dispose of me very easily, —I am almost disposed of already,—but this slavery question will not be disposed of until it is settled right." They disposed of him. They took him on to the hill at Charleston and tried him for treason. He was guilty enough. Bloody-handed, he was taken in the act. The Governor of Virginia said he was the gamest man he ever saw. But he was not thinking of his enemies when the governor thought he looked so brave. And so they hung him, and they sent his body to his home at North Alba in the Adirondacks, and his friends put upon his grave a huge granite boulder, carving in letters that you can see miles away: "John Brown." Under this stone his body still lies mouldering, but there was part of him not under the jurisdiction of Virginia, a part they could never hang or bury, and to the infinite surprise of the Governor of Virginia his soul went marching on.

Slavery did not die because the North won in the war; military force can never destroy that which is right in itself. Slavery died because the South saw a greater future freed from this incubus. Secession was not killed by force of arms, but by moral force, starting with General Robert E. Lee in his noble speech to his men at Appomattox Court-house. He appealed to them to be henceforth good citizens of the United States; and the patriotic men of the South came to realize that this our continent could not be split in two by rival warlike factions.

This human slavery vanished in the hour of its triumph. The world has seen it at a different angle, and the movement of civilization can never permanently go backward. I

might tell you of the prophets of freedom and good will, who have given a new intelligence to the world.

But the world over, the story runs much the same. The old wrong dies in its triumph. The world rises to a higher level of morals and of intelligence. The prophet beholds the dawn a little in advance of the others; but sooner or later the light comes to the great body of men.

And so it will be with the most awful and ruinous of crimes and blunders—war between nations. It may be that this is not the last war. It may be that civilization must pass through a more terrible ordeal before the rule of force and terror shall have passed away.

It may be that kings and empires, privilege and exploitation, warriors and weapons, dreadnoughts, submarines, and Zeppelins, must all pass away in one grand horror. But the end must come. God is not mocked forever; neither is man.

DAVID STARR JORDAN.